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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR FEBRUARY 08, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for February 08, 2006. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

BOLGE: The caricature crisis has been spreading with mobile phone messages as well. One mobile phone message asks receivers to send this message to 10 more people and the text asks the receivers to boycott Danish and Jewish goods.

BOLGE / ZAMAN: Aytac Durak, Adana Mayor, joined in the controversial debate currently circulating in Adana politics about criticism fired by people from AKP ranks in Adana against Bilal Nadir Gok, who was re-elected as the Yuregir District AKP Chairperson (see press summary 02/07). Some AKP circles blamed Gok for showing nepotism and favoring members of a certain religious sect. However, Aytac Durak said that AK party was in good hands and elections within the party organization were held democratically (see press summary 02/07).

BOLGE: A group of activist women in Adana staged a protest against the violence women have been subjected to.

BOLGE / EVRENSEL: Nine administrative members of the DTP Adana provincial organization, who were detained for holding a photographic exhibition in Adana two days ago to commemorate PKK militants that recently died (see press summary 02/07), were arraigned and then released by the court.

BOLGE: Hanri Leylek, Bishop of Mersin's Italian Catholic Church, announced that freedom of expression did not entitle people to despise the faiths of other people.

EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM: Osman Baydemir, Diyarbakir Mayor, whose recent visit to the U.S. caused a political crisis in Turkey, said that he did not come to Washington to express complaints about Turkey. Baydemir said that he would tell in various platforms in the U.S. what he has already been telling in Turkey about the Kurdish issue. According to Baydemir, Kurdish issue could not be resolved through arms; an environment of dialogue should be established instead.

EVRENSEL: Villagers, who has reportedly overcome their fears against bird flu, has been continuing to breed poultry in coops and stables in Ardahan. Villagers reportedly think that bird flu would not affect the animals if animals are kept in enclosed spaces.

EVRENSEL: Sumeyye Mamuk, who contracted bird flu and has recuperated following a 15-day medical treatment, started her school today in Van.

EVRENSEL: Workers of the state-owned Malatya Tekel Cigarette Factory staged a march to protest the government's decision to close down the factory. Some unions, political parties and associations in the Tunceli province sent letters to the workers to extend support for their protest actions.

SABAH (GUNEY): 13.59 acres of land in Adana was the center of a controversial debate between two AKP municipalities on how to regulate public works improvement planning. A "cold war" has reportedly been going on between Adana Mayor Aytac Durak and Yuregir District Mayor Azim Ozturk on the issue. Yuregir Municipality Assembly has recently overturned a solicitation to change the regulation concerning the land.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Turkish authorities denied news reports circulating about Abdullah Ocalan that he recently has had a spasm problem in his heart.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Tunceli 4th Commando brigade has reportedly started expropriating some quarters in Tunceli where nearly 25 houses are located on security grounds. Dwellers and owners of the land will file complaints with judicial authorities to solve the issue.

YENI SAFAK / OZGUR GUNDEM: The court, which brought action against a folkloric dance team of a school and its teacher for wearing outfits that resembled PKK militants' outfits during a folkloric dance performance held on October 29-Republic Day ceremony in Hakkari's Yuksekova district in 2005, decided to discontinue action.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Zaman daily's November 8 reporting in 2005 about Van Yuzuncu Yil University Rector Yucel Askin, alleging that, according to Jandarma intelligence sources, Askin brought PKK supporters to senior positions in the university, was confirmed as baseless by the Jandarma National Command.

ZAMAN: Turkish Parliamentary Commission Probing Semdinli Case, following its inquiries with the security directorate and Jandarma, has also started hearing statements from MIT intelligence center officials. A commission member from CHP was reportedly astounded when Cengiz Sisman, MIT's Hakkari Regional Director, said that MIT was not knowledgeable about any of the 18 separate bombings that took place in Hakkari between June and November in 2005.

ZAMAN / HURRIYET: A 13-year-old girl, who was reportedly mentally retarded, committed suicide in Batman. Batman, a province where suicide rates have been high in past years, has come under public scrutiny in the last month for increased occurrence of suicide incidents. Five persons in Batman, four of which were female, committed suicide in separate incidents in January.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

OZGUR GUNDEM: Investments were carried out mainly in five western provinces of Turkey in 2005. Southeastern region, where military conflicts have been going on, has not enjoyed its share from investments because of the high risk factor involved in the region.
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